



Developing High Skills Programs and Highly Qualified Professionals

Ontario Agricultural College, University of Guelph

Introductions

- Jason Tran, Liaison Officer,
Ontario Agricultural College (OAC), U of G
 - Role: Support educational outreach initiatives related to:
agriculture, food, environment, business and horticulture
high school programs
- Project lead for the KTT project, “*Delivering High Skill Programs*”
 - Focus of today’s presentation

Agenda

- Introduce OAC Liaison Program
- Discuss details of the KTT project
- Review project delivery to date
- Future directions and success stories

Deep Roots in Education

- Since 1874 – OAC has been leaders of research and teaching related to *agriculture, food, communities and the environment*
- 2010 – OAC launched its Liaison Program, which provides outreach with targeted high school students and teachers
 - That share an interest in OAC's areas of expertise

OAC's Liaison Program

- Developed (in-part) to address forecasted workforce shortages and opportunities
 - Outreach to interested students may encourage enrollment in agriculture, food and environment programs.
 - These students represent potential highly qualified professionals to fill labour gaps across agri-food and environmental sectors
- OAC Liaison Program is delivered through:
 - Reach Ahead Days (for high school students)
 - Professional Development (PD) workshops for teachers
 - *Presentation will only focus on PD workshops*

PD Workshop: Goals & Objective

- Goal:
 - Increase teacher awareness of opportunities for careers and education related broadly to agriculture, food and environment
 - With the ultimate goal that teachers will share knowledge with students
- Objectives:
 - Provide teachers with examples of teaching resources and current research in agriculture, food and environment
 - Highlight career profiles, growth areas and employment trends in agriculture, food and environment
 - Enable networking opportunities to share and learn about best teaching practices and challenges

Professional Development (PD) Workshops

- KTT funding supports a series of PD workshops
- Workshops provide:
 - a forum for research and sector specific knowledge to be shared with a broad audience
 - Networking opportunities to learn about best teaching practices and challenges
- Workshops deliver education in key areas that:
 - Aligned with U of G/ OMAFRA partnership research themes, including *sustainable agriculture, food for health and environmental sustainability*

PD Workshop Format

- 2-3 OAC faculty present on:
 - Teaching resources used in agriculture, food , environment courses
 - Faculty's current research (provides ideas for high school classroom activities, discussion topics)
- External Partners present on:
 - Career profiles, employment trends and future outlook in agri-food and environmental sectors
- External Partners (so far) include:
 - Toronto Renewable Energy Co-operative, OMAFRA, AgCareers.Com, Career Education Council,

Program Delivery to date

- 3 workshops hosted, engaged a total of 146 high school teachers across Ontario
- Workshop themes include: *sustainable agriculture, food for health and environmental sustainability*
- Videos and presentations can be accessed from:
 - <http://www.oac.uoguelph.ca/future/outreach/pd.html>
 - <http://www.youtube.com/user/OACSHSM>

PD provides Largest Multiplier Effect

- ...in terms of creating awareness of opportunities in agriculture, food, environment.
- Workshops offer a large audience to outreach with, providing the potential to engage a broader and younger audience.
- As per Prof. Jonathan Schmidt (principal investigator of KTT funded PD workshops):

“ Teach one student and you’ll teach them and their parents. But if you inform the teacher about options, you get the potential to inform hundreds of students.”

Outreach across Ontario



Measuring Program Success

- Teacher surveyed about their experiences...
 - Response rate of 36% (53 of 146 teachers)
 - 91% of teachers agreed the workshop was **effective** in supporting their classrooms
 - 93% of teachers agreed the workshop was **useful** in supporting their classroom
 - 100% of teachers would **attend future** workshops.

Future Direction

- May 23, 2012 (tentative) – Renewable Energy PD workshop – SW ONT, Ridgetown Campus
- KTT funding will provide one more workshop in 2012
- *Increase outreach in Eastern Ontario through our Kemptville campus*

Acknowledgements

- PD workshops would not be possible without:
 - KTT funding through the Agri-Food and Rural Link within the OMAFRA-U of G Partnership
- OAC's outreach initiatives are further supported by external partners, including:
 - Grand River Agricultural Society,
 - OAC class of 1953 and
 - Monsanto

Success Stories

- *“As a guidance counsellor, the presentation on the career opportunities in agriculture was useful”*
- *“The event had a good mix of academic speakers and someone to speak to careers in the agri-food sector”*
- Teacher feedback reinforces the knowledge and awareness gained from PD workshops, a reflection that the workshops are achieving the goal and objectives.